

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Following House and Senate passage, the Farm Bill is now headed to the president for his signature. Contained in this \$286 billion, multi-year bill is funding for numerous food-safety programs vital to the Central Coast's \$3 billion fresh produce industry.

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"This large pot of money for fresh produce research is great for our Central Coast farmers, it's just the sort of support our farmers need," **Rep. Farr** said. "We've all seen over the past year how outbreaks can affect Salinas Valley farmers, so it's absolutely vital the we direct as many resources as possible toward preventing future incidents."

These funds were included in the newly created \$230 million Specialty Crop Research Initiative, a competitive grant program to be managed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. It's these types of research grants that have proved so vital to the health and success of Salinas Valley agriculture.

"I've always been proud of Salinas as the world's biggest fresh garden," said **Dennis Donohue**, mayor of Salinas and incoming chairman of the Grower-Shipper Association of Central California. "But it's equally important that we be the world's biggest fresh laboratory. We need the resources to enhance the work we're already doing and focus attention on food safety, an issue so important to American consumers."

"The whole industry is delighted to see these funds in the bill," **Donohue** said. "In an increasingly competitive world, one of the things that will allow us to maintain our advantage is to maintain and enhance consumer confidence in our products. My thanks go to Sam for all the work he puts into helping our farmers."

The Specialty Crop Block Grant Program is another resource for fresh produce programs. This \$224 million, five-year program will expand the scope of research grants across the nation. The funds are distributed to states, with California historically receiving the bulk of funds.

"The steps we've taken thus far have been based on the best science we have, the best research we have. But to be honest, that's not a lot. We need much more," said **Jim Bogart**, president of the Grower-Shipper Association. "What I'm encouraged about is that these programs will pump a lot of money into research. We'll be provided with the sound science and data we need to base our future food safety efforts."

"We've been saying all along that more research is needed and this will go a long way toward achieving that," **Bogart** added. "And I want to thank Sam for his great support for our industry. He's a real leader in our efforts, especially with respect to this farm bill."

The Specialty Crop Research Initiative and the Specialty Crop Block Grants are the two largest pieces of research funding in the Farm Bill, but they're not the only ones. The bill also provides \$377 million over 10 years for a variety of pest and disease detection and control programs. These funds will be used in part to promote federal, state and local cooperation, including cooperative, audit-based certification systems to address plant pest infestations.

"The Specialty Crop Research Initiative is a critical priority for the fresh produce industry," said **Robert Guenther**, senior vice president of public policy at United Fresh Produce Association. "This program will serve as a strong foundation for fresh produce food safety research. I applaud the leadership Sam Farr who has been the champion of this initiative for years."

The research initiative is new, but the block grant program has been around for years. In that past, it has funded such state programs as a research program for the California Department of Food and Agriculture that explored the use of new pesticides and a marketing project by the Central Coast Vineyard Team exploring the long range potential for sustainable wines.

"The Central Coast produces so much of our fresh produce, it must be at the center of

the fight to keep that produce healthy," **Rep. Farr** said. "We have the farmers and we have the brain power, a combination that makes us better-suited to this type of work than anywhere else in the world. We have an obligation to provide safe food and we're doing the best work to keep it so."

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